



BusinessMatters

VOLUME II, ISSUE 2

SUMMER 2005



The *Race to GED* is Workforce Development

by Dr. Yvonne V. Thayer, Director, Office of Adult Education and Literacy, Virginia Department of Education

There is an upward trend in the economy nationwide, and employers are currently facing the most severe shortage of skilled labor in history. Employers know that if they are not able to maintain a stable, competitive workforce, they are in danger of losing their position in the marketplace. How are employers positioning themselves—not only to

survive, but also to thrive in this environment? How do employers add value to their organization to sustain and expand their market share? The answer is simple: the workplace of the future will use educational opportunities to “grow” employees for career tracks.

GED graduates are competent to perform effectively in the workplace and are qualified for industry-specific technical skills training to advance

in a career path. More than 95 percent of U.S. employers recognize the GED in considering hiring, salary, and opportunity for advancement. We are seeking your support as an employer to encourage existing workers and new recruits who have not completed high school to pursue a GED.

Governor Warner launched a statewide *Race to GED* campaign because he recognizes the value of targeting the 518,752 working-age Virginians without a high school credential who have

the potential to pass the GED Tests in 90 to 180 days. This valuable resource, if tapped, can provide a high return on investment for employers that promote access to the GED as a recruitment and retention tool. Some of the benefits include: a more educated workforce and a safer one; an increase in productivity and a decrease in absenteeism; and a way of growing their business into the future. Promoting a GED graduate from within also limits the cost associated with training external candidates.

continued on next page

Return on *Race to GED* Investment is High for Employers

The return on the *Race to GED* investment is high for employers who promote access to GED instruction and testing as a recruitment and retention tool. The overall education level of employees is a critical factor in sustaining and growing a company's market share. More than 95 percent of U.S. employers recognize the GED in considering hiring, salary, and opportunity for advancement.

“The impact on the people who complete the program has been phenomenal—on both a personal and professional level. The return to VDOT is a more educated workforce and, consequently, a safer one.”

*Virginia Department
of Transportation*

“Absenteeism dropped from 6.75 percent to 2.1 percent, and productivity increased from 89 percent to 99 percent. Employee morale is markedly better. Learning is

contagious. This was a business decision. Yes, it costs money to do this, but it's pennies to the dollar when you consider the benefits.”

Sara Lee Coffee and Tea

“GED instruction also teaches time management skills. That helps on the job too. Employees who earn their

GED credentials demonstrate increased loyalty to Clarian.”

Clarian Health

“Since implementing the GED program, turnover has decreased by 11 percent. Ninety percent of our promotions are from within so we believe in educating security

continued on page 3

If you would like to subscribe to this newsletter or make an e-mail address change, simply e-mail joyce.fogg@vec.virginia.gov.

GED Instruction—Value Added to the Workplace

To earn a GED credential a candidate must complete a [battery of five tests](#) that measure competency in math, science, reading, writing, social studies, communication, information processing, problem solving, and critical thinking skills. GED curriculum incorporates content relevant to the workplace including computer/Internet skills, job-readiness skills, and customer service skills.

The *Race to GED* includes the GED Fast Track that targets working-age adults, employed and unemployed, who can demonstrate academic readiness to prepare for and pass the GED tests within 90 days. Approximately 518,752 working-age Virginians have a functioning educational level that qualifies them for the GED Fast Track. The GED Fast Track diagnoses what the adult learner already knows and prescribes intensive study to acquire the knowledge and skills needed to pass the five GED tests. Adult learners in the GED Fast Track have exceeded a 90 percent pass rate.

The GED Fast Track also includes WorkKeys training that prepares GED graduates for a Career Readiness Certificate. The Career Readiness Certificate is a job skill credential that employers use to match the skill level of employees to job requirements.

Industry-specific GED Fast Track curricula provide job-related experience in the context of (1) Health Care, (2) Hospitality and Travel, and (3) Sales and Service. The health care industry is a primary target because allied health will occupy six of the ten fastest-growing occupation slots through 2012. The health care curricula guide incorporated in a specialized Fast Track produces GED graduates who have health care-related vocabulary, mathematics, reading, writing, and science instruction. Health care employers will benefit from GED graduates who have the potential to advance in a career track through technical skills certifications in allied health or health care management.

The hospitality and travel industry is experiencing a diminishing labor pool. Homeland security is denying visas to many foreign workers, and hotels are

finding it particularly difficult to find employees for a variety of jobs. Employers will benefit from GED graduates who have experienced learning activities connected specifically to the hospitality and travel industry and have the potential to advance in a career track supported by postsecondary technical skills training related to current and future job openings.

Total employment in the United States is projected to increase by 22.2 million jobs over the next ten years. A significant number of those jobs will be in the sales and service industry. Employers will benefit from GED graduates who have the ability to communicate effectively with the public, solve problems, make appropriate decisions, and work together as members of a team. The sales and service curricula guide incorporated in a specialized GED Fast Track will provide the foundational and work-related skills for productive employment in sales and service.

Local *Race to GED* adult education program managers will work with employers to offer on-site GED classes and GED testing to meet industry-specific employment needs. For more information on how you can join the *Race to GED*, contact your local school division and ask for the adult education administrator, or contact Patty Shortt at patty.shortt@doe.virginia.gov at the Virginia Department of Education, 804-225-3997.

Race to GED continued from page 1

Adult education programs statewide provide services to support the Governor's workforce development initiative, and we need your help in getting results. For more information on how your workforce can benefit from the *Race to GED*, contact your local school division and ask for the adult education administrator, or contact Patty Shortt, Workforce Development Specialist, Office of Adult Education and Literacy, Virginia Department of Education, 804-225-3997, or e-mail patty.shortt@doe.virginia.gov. We look forward to working with you in this important workforce development initiative.

Message from the Commissioner



This issue has been dedicated to information regarding the Governor's Initiative on the *Race to GED*. The economic benefits of getting a GED are indisputable.

- A Virginia worker with a GED or high school degree makes more than double the income of a worker without a GED or degree.
- More than 700,000 working-age Virginians (18-64) do not have a GED or high school diploma.
- In 40 out of the 134 localities in Virginia, more than 30 percent of adults do not have a GED or diploma. The overall education level of a workforce is a critical factor in attracting new business and jobs.
- The Governor's Initiative has doubled the number of Virginia workers who have earned GEDs.

Doubling the number of GEDs awarded has been accomplished through two major initiatives:

- Targeted marketing efforts across the Commonwealth aimed at educating adults about the financial and personal benefits of getting a GED.
- Creation of pilot "Fast Track GED" programs in at least five regions of the state. These pilot programs will identify individuals most likely to benefit from a GED and encourage them to participate in an intensive, three-to-four month GED training program.

The Governor's initiative involves all stakeholders in an effort to develop a streamlined workforce development system to benefit both employers and employees and help ensure that Virginia's workforce is well prepared for the jobs of the 21st Century.

VEC Race to GED activities

The Charlottesville Field Office hosts GED Express classes that meet two days per week. Call (434) 984-7630.

The Williamsburg Field Office is entering its third year in offering GED classes daily during the business week. The GED program at this location was included in a feature article in the February 07, 2004, issue of the *Virginia Gazette*. Call (757) 253-4738.

The Prince William Field Office was a pilot site for the Race to GED program. Prince William currently offers GED practice tests. Call (703) 897-0407.

The Winchester Field Office provides GED training on a bi-weekly basis. Individuals completing the course work will have no more than a one-week wait before taking the GED test. Call (540) 722-3415.

The Culpeper Field Office has continued to promote the *Race to GED* by displaying posters and flyers in the local office in addition to active participation on the Regional Literacy Council and collaboration with the George Washington Carver Center.

The Harrisonburg Field Office has had an on-site GED program for the last two years. On October 1, 2004, the Rockingham County School system began an accelerated GED component under the banner of *Race to GED*. Call (540) 434-2513.

The Warsaw Workforce Center offers GED classes after hours twice weekly, on Tuesday and Thursday nights. Call (804) 333-3675.

The Marion Field Office has worked in partnership with the Mt. Rogers Adult Basic Education Program and the Smyth County School System to offer GED classes (assessment and instruction) in the Marion Workforce Center since 2001. In addition to the staff provided by the school system, three VEC staff members are trained to administer the GED test. Call (276) 781-7431.

GED classes are held each Tuesday evening from 5–8 p.m. in the Bristol One-Stop. This is in partnership with Mt. Rogers Regional Adult Education. GED testing is conducted on a monthly basis. Call (276) 642-7350.

At the Roanoke Workforce Center, Roanoke City Public Schools holds GED classes on Mondays and Wednesdays of each week. Call (540) 561-7525.

The Norfolk Field Office administers the Adult Basic Education (ABE) program on site. This program trains students to pass the GED, portions of the GED, and encourages students to complete higher academic level testing. Call (757) 455-3960.

The Wytheville Field Office provides GED classes every Thursday night from 6–9 p.m. Call (276) 228-4051.

The Portsmouth Field Office offers classes for the GED on Mondays and Thursdays of each week, in partnership with the Portsmouth Public Schools' Department of Adult and Alternative Programs. Call (757) 396-6865.



Return on Race continued from page 1

officers to help them move to the next level.”

Securitas Security Services USA, Inc.

“Giving employees the opportunity to further their education was a business decision. We see this program as a way of growing our business into the future.”

Campbell Soup Company LTD

